

LEARNERS

A Newsletter for the Winnetka Community of Learners



SPRING 2016

THE WINNETKA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

www.winnetka36.org

CULTIVATING A COMMUNITY OF MATHEMATICIANS

“We want our students to love math and be confident in their mathematical abilities,” says Eileen Goodspeed, District 36 Math Facilitator. Classroom activities are designed to encourage high-level thinking where perseverance is championed and concepts are connected to daily lives. To build mathematical thinkers, District educators challenge students to use various strategies to solve problems based on real-world situations, like balancing a budget. Students then share problem-solving techniques with their classmates—similar to what a mathematician would do in an academic setting. This allows students to learn from each other, and provides teachers with valuable insight that informs differentiation.

Winnetka teachers and facilitators consistently engage in professional learning opportunities in order to infuse the latest research and resources into teaching and learning. One recent conference, hosted by the National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (NCSM), resulted in the incorporation of the Number Talks strategy in kindergarten through eighth grade classrooms. This method is used in daily exercises to build mental math fluency that “sticks.”



“Educators know that the most productive math-learning environments are those in which students receive positive messages about their unlimited potential and work on interesting and complex problems; in which they feel free to try ideas, fail, and revise their thinking,” said Jo Boaler, Professor of Mathematics at Stanford University, in a recent article in *The Atlantic*. “When educators teach real mathematics—a growth subject of depth and connections—the opportunities for learning increase and classrooms become filled with happy, excited, and engaged math students.”¹

“When educators teach real mathematics – a growth subject of depth and connections – the opportunities for learning increase and classrooms become filled with happy, excited, and engaged math students.”

The strategies woven throughout math instruction in The Winnetka Public Schools are intended to prepare students for the rigors of high school, as well as promote a lifelong interest in math. After eight months of research and development, the District has launched a website dedicated to math, accessible via www.winnetka36.org/math as a resource to help guide parents on how to support student progress in this regard from kindergarten through eighth grade. Throughout the 2015-2016 school year, District schools have hosted an array of sessions to inform parents of best practices in math education. Paul Sally, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction at New Trier High School, addressed parents at a Winnetka Parent Institute event in February 2016. He noted that “Washburne students are feeling very prepared for mathematics, which is great. We use the same sources as the Winnetka schools do for math instruction. We’re very supportive of the approach they are taking.”

Image at left: A Skokie School student focuses on a critical-thinking activity.

¹ Boaler, Jo. “The Math Class Paradox.” *The Atlantic*. December 31, 2015. Online.



HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY, HUBBARD WOODS!



Hubbard Woods School, which has served thousands of Winnetka students over the past century, is honoring its 100th birthday this school year. Opened in 1915, the building was originally called Skokie School and served students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Modern for its time, it was designed to have a welcoming atmosphere for children and consisted of the auditorium and four classrooms. When The Skokie School was constructed in 1924, the school's name was changed to Hubbard Woods School after Gilbert Hubbard, a businessman who sold shipping supplies to Great Lakes sailors in Chicago and served as the Village Treasurer for five years.

Over the past century, the school building has evolved to include additional indoor and outdoor spaces, such as WGST, a student-led television studio; the recently installed Aunt Ruth's Garden; and the new IDEA Lab, an innovative STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) space based in the Resource Center. An environment focused on the whole child, deeply connected to a tradition grounded in experiential learning, still pervades teaching and learning at Hubbard Woods School, 100 years strong.

Current families, the community, and alumni are invited to the 100th Anniversary Celebration at Hubbard Woods School on May 3, 2016, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Images on this page: Students sang "Happy Birthday" at an all-school party in September 2015. In historic and current images, students engage in experiential learning, a Winnetka Public Schools tradition that continues to thrive today.



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Trisha Kocanda
Superintendent



It seems fitting to unveil our Shared Vision to you, the Winnetka community, in Spring, a season of growth and renewal. This statement is a product of input from students, staff, parents, and community members. Building on our mission and core values, our Shared Vision honors our history yet sets us in a direction that is fit for a 21st Century learner.

The Winnetka Public Schools community empowers every student to flourish in an innovative, experiential environment. We support and challenge all learners to actively engage in their continual growth and achievement to make a meaningful difference in the world.

This is an exciting time in The Winnetka Public Schools, and I am eager to see what we accomplish together as we put our new Shared Vision into action. I also want to provide an update on the “Big 5” priorities the District committed to focusing on during the 2015-2016 school year.

The “Big 5” included an extended day kindergarten study, the launch of Winnetka University (a state-of-the-art professional learning platform for our teachers), and a focus on Reading, Math, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). Throughout this issue, and in the infographic below, you will learn about some of the outcomes of this work.

As educators, we view The Winnetka Public Schools experience as a cohesive and purposeful progression from kindergarten through eighth grade. Our Shared Vision emphasizes that growth and achievement are important – academically, as well as socially and emotionally. As students grow from grade-to-grade, it is imperative that we offer learners the right blend of support and challenge. While we directly impact the formative kindergarten to eighth grade years, our ultimate goal is for students to learn how “to make a meaningful difference in the world” both now and in the future. Therefore, it is critical we work together to build the capacity and belief that it just takes one to make a difference for many.

On behalf of the District, we remain dedicated to serving the children of Winnetka in engaging and student-centric ways. We know children learn best by a hands-on, progressive approach, a philosophy backed by years of implementation and modern research. Our Shared Vision complements our beliefs and encompasses our community’s desires for our schools for years to come.

— THE —
BIG

2015-2016

5

14 **EDUCATORS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS** have served on the Kindergarten Committee, studying the benefits and feasibility of offering an Extended Kindergarten Day in D36

OVER 5,000 **NEW BOOKS** have been added to classroom libraries. Thanks to the Winnetka Public Schools Foundation, which helped D36 fund these purchases!

20 **ROBOTS** enhance an array of learning activities in the D36 STEAM environments

4 **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COURSES** are offered to staff in Spring 2016

23 **MATH PARENT EDUCATION EVENTS** hosted throughout D36 this year

KINDERGARTEN

STEAM

READING

WINNETKA UNIVERSITY

MATH

BOARD PRESIDENT MESSAGE

Kendra Wallace
Board President



It has been an honor to lead the School Board as we strive to make thoughtful decisions on matters that will impact the Winnetka community both now and years into the future. As we near the end of the 2015-16 school year, I would like to highlight a few of these decisions.

In February, the School Board approved a new Shared Vision for the District. On behalf of the Board, we are committed to propelling our Shared Vision forward by ensuring that our all learners are supported to reach their fullest potential.

Following a reduction of the 2015 Levy Request from 5.95% to 1.87% at our December 2015 Meeting, the School Board approved to abate, or not collect, \$1.1 million in taxes at our March 2016 Board Meeting. Our School Board's financial philosophy is to collect only what is needed from taxpayers, as well as carefully considering community input when making financial decisions.

Also in March, the School Board approved expanding the program piloted at the (L)ab at Washburne, The Skokie School MakerSpace, and the IDEA Lab at Hubbard Woods School, to all District 36 schools. This program is intended to expose students to a variety of innovative opportunities that not only enhance experiential learning, but prepare them for careers that may not even yet exist. We are confident that the addition of these environments at all of our schools will benefit our students in immeasurable ways.

I invite you to join us at our monthly School Board meetings as we discuss key issues and hear important updates on what is happening throughout the District. As a Board we are dedicated to engaging with our community, maintaining a presence in our schools, and being wise stewards of the resources with which you have entrusted us.

D36 ALUMNI SERVE AND LEAD AT NEW TRIER

At a Winnetka Parent Institute event in February 2016, New Trier High School's Superintendent and Associate Superintendent shared statistics on the academic success, leadership involvement, and service activities of District 36 alumni. For a comprehensive overview of how our graduates fare at New Trier, view the video of the presentation at www.winnetka36.org/wpi. Leadership and service statistics for District 36 alumni in 2014-2015, who comprise 19% of the New Trier student body, are highlighted below.

64%

of freshmen from D36 were in **SPORTS** compared to 51% of all freshmen identifying themselves as athletes

42%

of freshmen from D36 participated in a **CLUB OR ACTIVITY** compared to 47% of all freshmen

20%

of all students in **CURRENT SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS** are D36 alumni

28%

of all student **LEADERSHIP POSITIONS** (student government, service boards, etc.) are from D36 schools

25%

of seniors in **SALT (Student-Athlete Leadership Training)** are from D36

31%

of students in **ALPS (Activities Leadership Practicum Seminar)** are D36 graduates

SCHOOL BUDGET

The District’s budget is a planning document that provides the financial framework to support The Winnetka Public Schools’ goal of providing students with a high-caliber education, while serving as responsible financial stewards. Revenue is generated primarily from local property tax dollars, while expenses are determined by programmatic needs.

The School Board and staff are diligent about careful stewardship of these funds and work to deliver educational programs and maintain District buildings as efficiently as possible. This may result in surpluses, or positive ending fund balances. When savings are realized, funds are held in reserve for future educational needs. A reserve can extend the time between referenda, ensure cash flow when tax payments are not received in a timely fashion, and may be used for unexpected expenses.

Developing & monitoring the District’s budget is a year-round activity, incorporating an array of logistical, legal, and regulatory mandates.

The Board also recognizes its obligations to taxpayers in fulfilling its stewardship of District finances and related reserves. In response to this commitment over the past three years, the Board has returned in excess of \$4.0 million to taxpayers through a rebate or rollback of property taxes. The Board will continue to evaluate the need to balance its resources through the use of future abatements. This is in addition to planned refunding of debt in June 2017 providing future relief to taxpayers.

School Budget Cycle

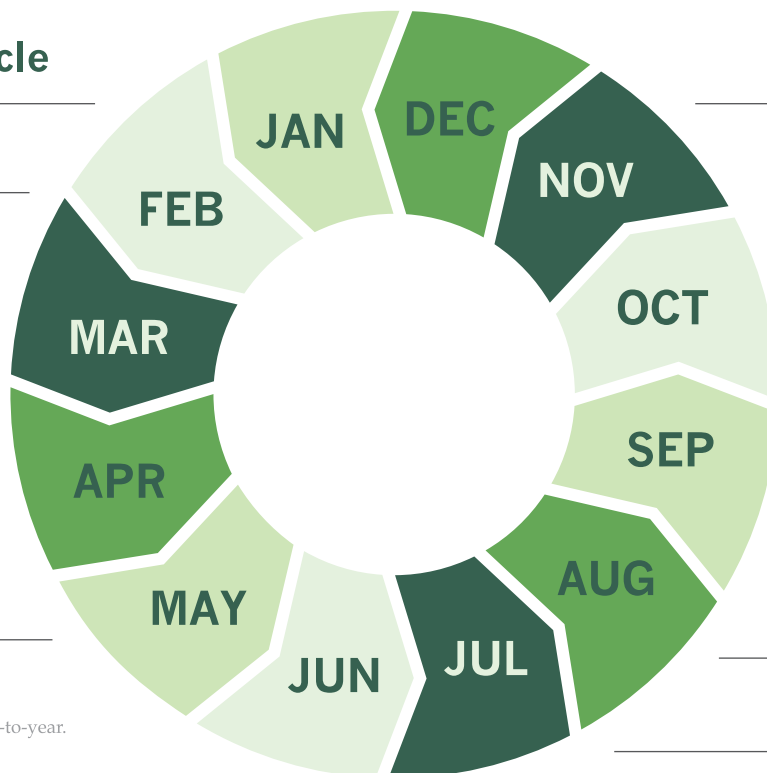
JANUARY
Budget Calendar Developed

FEBRUARY
Preliminary Staffing Plan Presented

MARCH
Staffing Plan Adopted

APRIL & MAY
Budget is Internally Developed and Refined

JUNE
Tentative Budget Presented and Approved



JULY
Annual Financial Audit Performed

AUGUST
Tentative Budget Adopted and on Public Display

SEPTEMBER
Budget Hearing and Vote

OCTOBER
Independent Financial Audit Presented

NOVEMBER
Preliminary Tax Levy Presented and Discussed

DECEMBER
Tax Levy Approved

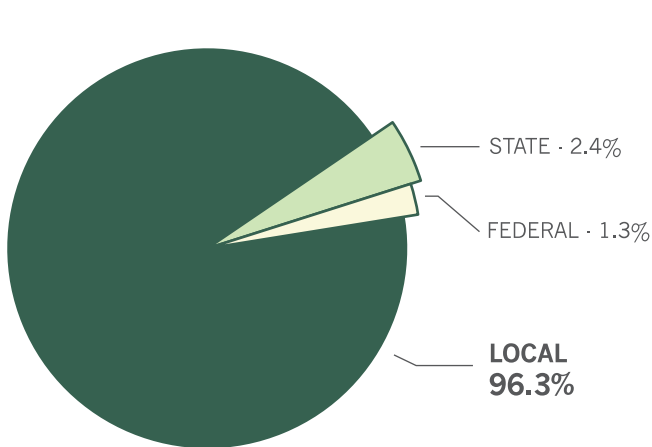
Note: Timing may vary slightly from year-to-year.

2014 – 2015 FINANCIAL REPORT

Thanks to the support of taxpayers and the careful stewardship of the School Board and staff, District 36 is in a sound financial position. The District maintains a AAA Bond Rating from Standard & Poor's, and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) again bestowed its highest honor, "Financial Recognition."

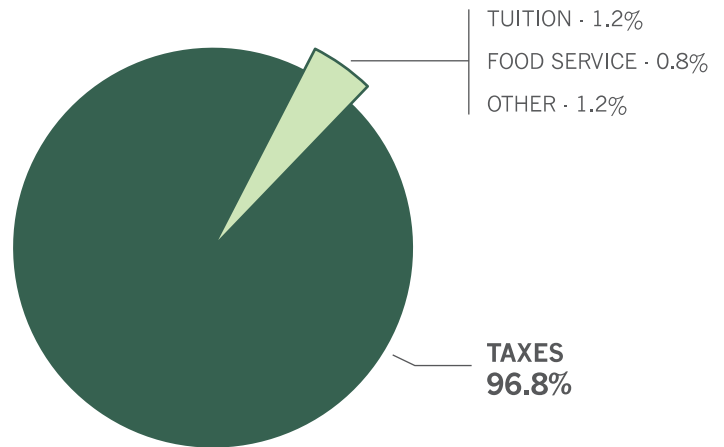
Revenue by Source

The Winnetka Public Schools District 36 receives 96% of its funds from local sources. Federal and state revenues are less than 4% of the District's revenue stream. Despite the poor financial situation in the state of Illinois, District finances have remained stable. However, due to economic conditions in the state and federal governments, future availability of revenue from both entities is at risk.



Local Revenue by Type

Property taxes are the primary source (97%) of local revenue for The Winnetka Public Schools. Local revenues are used for our community's children.

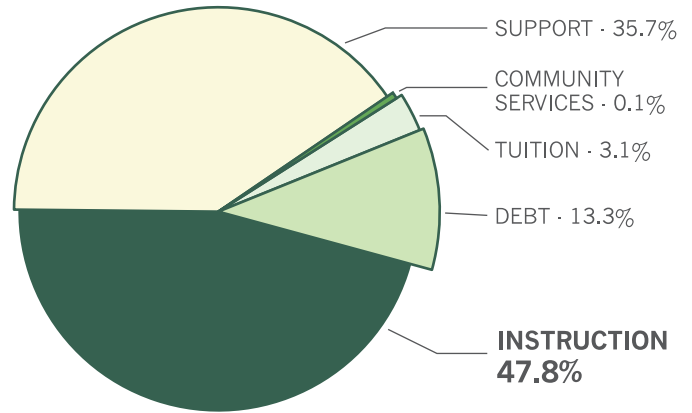


The Winnetka Public Schools Board approved the District's 2015 Tax Levy at its December 15, 2015 meeting. A property tax levy is an annual request to Cook County for the property tax revenue a school district needs to operate the district for the subsequent fiscal year.

The Board approved a 1.87% increase to the 2015 Levy and abated \$1.1 million of property taxes to taxpayers. Future annual tax abatements and a bond redemption is planned for June 2017 to provide both immediate and long-term tax relief and address the reasonable accrual of surpluses in consideration of maintaining a quality education for students.

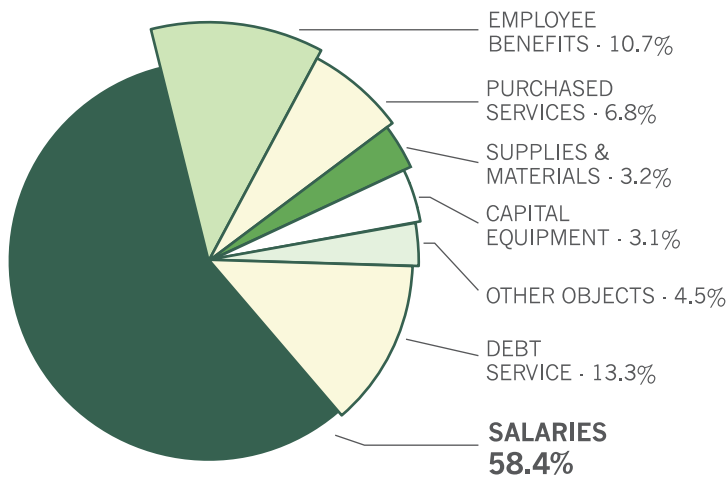
Instruction Takes Priority

District Budget priorities are guided by the singular goal of providing the best possible education for the children of Winnetka while remaining fiscally responsible. This priority is reflected by how much money is devoted to teaching and learning. The majority (83%) of the District's budget is spent on Instruction and Instructional support.



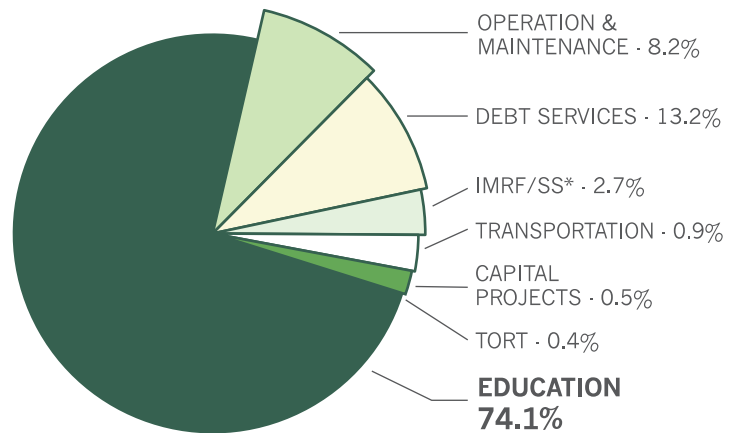
Expenditure by Object

When expenditures are considered by type they are referred to as objects. Education is a people-driven enterprise. Salaries and benefits, primarily of teachers, associates, custodians, and other staff—those who provide outstanding educational experiences for students—constitute the majority of this (69%) category.



Expenditure by Fund

Per Illinois State Law, the District's budget is divided into categories, or funds. Each of these accounts has a specific purpose or function and funds are not fungible. Only limited types of transfers are permitted, and money in one fund cannot be used for expenses in another. For example, the District spent more than 13% of its local dollars on debt service. Efforts are underway to pay this debt early to save the taxpayers money.



* Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund and Social Security

AAA Bond Rating

Credit ratings are opinions about the ability of an entity, such as a corporation, state or city government, to meet its financial obligations. The Winnetka Public Schools continues to receive Standard & Poor's highest rating and is one of a relatively few Districts nationwide to be rated AAA.

Financial Recognition

The Winnetka Public Schools received a "Recognition" distinction from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). This represents the highest category of financial strength. District 36 received a score of 3.80 on a 4.0 scale for several consecutive years.

District 36 received perfect scores from the ISBE in the categories of Fund Balance/Revenue Ratio, Expenditures/Revenue Ratio, Days Cash on Hand, and Short-Term Borrowing and maintains a AAA bond rating.

IGNITING A LIFELONG PASSION FOR READING

Educators at The Winnetka Public Schools strive to create a learning environment that fosters a love of reading as students progress from elementary school to high school. Teachers confer with students to personalize instruction and recommend appropriately challenging literature that students will not only enjoy, but will increase fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. The key to building strong reading skills is encouraging high volume reading at a “just right” level.

“We get to know our students and this helps us share books that appeal to their individual interests. Our recommendations increase in sophistication as students are ready to move on to the next level. Not only is this a research-based best practice, it also aligns with our District value of honoring student voice,” says Jen Fiegen, Literacy Facilitator. To provide access to an array of high-quality literature, robust classroom libraries are continually updated with new titles. By the start of the 2015-2016 school year, over 5,000 new books were added to our classroom libraries (thanks, in part, to The Winnetka Public Schools Foundation).

“We get to know our students and this helps us share books that appeal to their individual interests.”

Images on this page: Greeley School students enjoy “just right” books from their classroom library. Students at The Skokie School celebrate completing all of the 2016 Rebecca Caudill Young Readers’ Book Award-nominated books.

Authors frequently visit The Winnetka Public Schools to engage with students on a variety of literary topics. School Book Clubs are thriving, such as the Pride of Lions Book Club at Carleton Washburne School, which encouraged students to read 892 books since fall 2015, and a recent PTO-led book club at Crow Island School. Positive outcomes abound from these opportunities. “A reading community comes to life where students are recommending books to each other all the time,” says Betty Weir, Curriculum Coordinator.

Recently, Winnetka Parent Institute events were presented by the District’s Literacy Facilitators and leaders from Columbia University Teachers College to share strategies on supporting reading progress at home. Providing children with the opportunity to choose books on topics and genres that they enjoy both at school and home is a best practice endorsed by educators and experts throughout the nation. “If the goal is, how do you make kids lifelong readers, then it seems to me that there’s a lot to be said for the choice approach. As adults, as good readers, we don’t all read the same thing, and we revel in our idiosyncrasies as adult readers, so kids should have some of the same freedom,” says Catherine E. Snow, a professor at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education.¹



A COMMITMENT TO LIFELONG LEARNING

District 36 educators have participated in a plethora of professional learning opportunities throughout the course of the 2015-16 school year.

In August 2015, District staff attended a Reading Institute facilitated by **Columbia University's Teachers College**. Subsequently, staff developers from the Teachers College visited the District twice to share best practices in reading instruction and model lessons in classrooms.

Many District staff attended the **Inaugural Preschool Kindergarten Summit** at the Chicago Botanic Garden in February 2016. The Winnetka Public Schools was a proud sponsor of the event, hosted by the Alliance for Early Childhood, which focused on best practices in early childhood education.

The first weekend in April 2016, The Winnetka Public Schools hosted the **Google for Education Chicago Summit**. Presenters from around the world collaborated with educators, and D36 students, to learn about using the latest technologies to enhance teaching and learning.

District science educators have participated in workshops on the Next Generation Science Standards, and the District had a presence at the **National Science Teachers Association** conference in spring 2016.

Image at right: A student from The Skokie School shares tech tips with teacher Su Pesa during a "Don't Worry, Be Appy" session at a recent Institute Day.

Educators from the D36 math committee were present at the annual conference for the **National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics** as well as the **National Council of Teachers of Mathematics** in April 2016.

Students have played a role in enhancing professional learning. At November, January, and April Institute Days, middle school students presented sessions called "**Don't Worry, Be Appy**" to instruct staff on their favorite educational apps, programs, and gadgets.

Many District staff have also shared their expertise with other educators by presenting at **national conferences** on a variety of topics – from world language to music education to technology.



Daniel Ryan, Principal of Hubbard Woods School, reads to first grade students. He has been promoted to Assistant Superintendent of Professional Learning and Human Resources, starting July 1, 2016. His responsibilities will include overseeing the Human Resources needs of District staff, fostering professional growth, facilitating staff evaluations, and executing a plan for recruiting and retaining high-quality candidates. Ryan's position replaces the Director of Human Resources.

ARTS ALIVE! 21st CENTURY LEARNING

The Winnetka Public Schools is committed to facilitating experiential learning, interdisciplinary discovery, and leadership opportunities for students. These experiences are deeply rooted in Progressive Education and tailored for the 21st century learner. Through the arts, our students are developing content for authentic audiences, honing critical-thinking skills, and preparing to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Enjoy a few examples of this integrated learning in action.

A collaboration between science and art classes at The Skokie School focused on “Art and the Cosmic Connection” and introduced students to properties of the solar system using art concepts. Design elements including lines, shapes, and value convey information about the geology and structure of different bodies in the solar system. Students were able to use these elements to understand and analyze NASA

images from space through the lens of a scientist, and then they created pastel drawings of the solar image of their choice. The ability to draw with such detail would not be possible without modern scientific advancements that allow students to observe vivid images of space.

A student created a stunning celestial drawing with pastels after viewing photos from NASA.



The Hubbard Woods School music teacher asked first graders how they could brighten up one of the public spaces at the school. The students indicated a desire to curate the area to incorporate the changing mood of different seasons. After a brainstorming session with teachers, the students suggested installing sound domes to add an interesting new element to the school. A PTO grant made the idea possible. Attached to the ceiling, the sound domes allow those passing underneath to have an acoustic experience similar to listening to headphones. First grade students created original sound with iPad apps, and second grade students developed a wind composition from recordings of strong winds experienced in Winnetka and surrounding areas in February. The compositions are often inspired by what students are studying, merging art with other academic disciplines.

Hubbard Woods students use their iPads to act as "DJs" of the Sound Domes to reflect the mood of a rainy day.



At Carleton Washburne School, a seventh grade student asked to write a song for his fellow chorus members to perform. To bring the composition to life, the student used the software Noteflight.com. The Washburne choir sang the original piece, "Don't Let Go," at the 2016 Junior

High Choral Festival at New Trier High School in January, creating an extraordinary moment for the student composer and all of the students involved in the artistic process.

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Youtube: [The Winnetka Public Schools](https://www.youtube.com/TheWinnetkaPublicSchools)

**COMMUNITY
VOICES:**

**How did your
experience in D36
influence your
high school
decisions?**

“I thought taking the Stage Crew class would be a fun, hands-on class. Little did I know that the class fostered my love for leadership positions. Today, I am an elected officer of a club called the Tri-Ship Board.”

Matthew Gallo, Junior at New Trier High School



“...my years in District 36 schools allowed me to try new methods in academics as well as experiment with different extracurricular activities. Not only did I discover a passion for theater, but I learned how to direct and lead others. I gained confidence to become a leader in all aspects in my life at New Trier.”



Lucas Kane,
Sophomore
at New Trier
High School

“District 36 provided me with a positive, safe, and comfortable environment to learn and grow. The teachers all impacted me in great ways and I have changed for the better because of what they’ve taught me. During my time there, I was taught that being your own person and not following the crowd is the key to growing up. The support that I was provided with made me comfortable enough to thrive.”

Lucy Kreisa, Freshman at New Trier High School

